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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Committee on Shipping
Group of Experts on Multimodal Transport
Geneva, 9 March 1992
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Provisional agenda, annotations to the provisional agenda and suggestions for the organization of the work of the Group of Experts

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

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II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Introduction

In paragraph 1 of its resolution 67 (XIV), adopted on 29 June 1990, the Committee on Shipping requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD:

"(a) To convene during 1991, within available resources, a group of experts for one week:

(i) To discuss developments in the field of multimodal transport and containerization wherever there is a sea link;

(ii) To take stock of the principal problems that are experienced by users and providers of multimodal and/or container transport operations wherever there is a sea link; in doing so, the experts should pay due account to problems identified by UNCTAD as rendering the introduction of modern transport technology difficult in developing countries, in particular:

- inadequate transport infrastructure;
- non-availability of investment;
- lack of expertise of qualified operators;
- lack of necessary information of officials concerned;
- inadequate legislation such as customs regulations;
- unbalanced flow of container traffic; and
- reducing the technology gap between developed and developing countries with regard to implementation of multimodal transport and electronic data interchange;

(iii) To suggest elements of a future programme of work for the Committee in the field of multimodal transport and containerization wherever there is a sea link, bearing in mind that a major objective is to assist in practical terms multimodal transport operators and the multimodal transport of goods of developing countries;

(b) To select, in accordance with the usual principles of geographical distribution, 19 countries, which shall propose experts, from among whom the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will appoint 19 experts, also in accordance with the usual geographical distribution, to participate in the group of experts in their personal capacity. They should include representatives of shippers/shippers' organizations, multimodal transport operators, shipowners and government officials. Observers representing sectors mentioned above and being directly involved in multimodal transport operations and containerization as well as representatives of intergovernemental organizations and United Nations regional commissions may attend the meeting of the group of experts;

(c) To make available for such a meeting of the group of experts full conference facilities including one six-language team of interpreters."

In paragraph 3 (a) of the same resolution, the Committee further requested the UNCTAD secretariat to make available to the Group of Experts, "the relevant documentation prepared and made available to the Committee on Shipping at its fourteenth session".

The Committee further requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD "to make available the proposals and recommendations made by the group of experts to the Committee on Shipping at its fifteenth session for further consideration in order to enable the Committee on Shipping to adopt at that session its future programme of work in the field of multimodal transport and containerization wherever there is a sea link."

Item 1. Election of officers

In accordance with normal practice, the Group of Experts may wish to elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman-*cum*-Rapporteur.

Item 2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda in section I above has been drawn up by the UNCTAD secretariat. After the adoption of the agenda, the Group may wish to decide on the organization of its work.

The Group will have five working days to complete its business. It is suggested that, in principle, morning meetings be held from 10.00 to 13.00 and afternoon meetings from 15.00 to 18.00, during which hours interpretation facilities will be available.

In view of the many important subjects to be discussed and, therefore, the possible lack of time, the Group may wish to follow the lead set by an earlier group of experts on multimodal transport container tariff rules, which agreed to extend its daily work, if necessary, by two to three hours to enable the finalization of its work within the prescribed period. The Group may wish to reach a similar decision in order to allow the secretariat to make the requisite practical arrangements, taking into account that such extended working hours will be without interpretation.

The Group should endeavour to conclude its work by the end of the morning of Thursday 12 March, in order to enable the secretariat to process the draft report, together with the agreed draft programme of work and other relevant matters, for adoption on Friday 13 March.

Item 3. Developments in the field of multimodal transport, containerization, and technological development

Document:

- "Block train services in multimodal transport" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/2);

Background documents:

- "Effects of EDP and EDI on transport organizations and users" - note by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/5);
- "Developments in the field of container standards" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/6);
- "Developments in multimodal transport" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/328);
- "Review of developments in standardization of containers and related activities" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/329);
- UNCTAD/ICC Rules for Multimodal Transport Documents;
- Multimodal Transport Newsletters Nos. 2 and 3; and
- Review of Maritime Transport 1990 (TD/B/C.4/340).

Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/2, prepared in accordance with the request of the Committee on Shipping, reports on the advantages and problems connected with the operation of container block trains in multimodal transport services and reviews the developments in this field in different countries. It contains a number of recommendations which the Group of Experts may wish to consider. The background documents are described below.

Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/5 highlights the dangers of not introducing electronic data interchange (EDI), summarizes the findings of several papers, including a study by ESCAP, in the field of EDP/EDI and adds some suggestions by the UNCTAD secretariat for possible implementation of EDI in individual companies.

Document TD/B/C.4/328 was prepared by the secretariat for the fourteenth session of the Committee. It deals with technological development and the role of freight forwarders in developing countries, gives an interim report of the joint work with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) on the development of model provisions for MT documents, and contains a number of important observations on the consequences of the introduction of multimodal transport in developing countries.

Document TD/B/C.4/329, which was also prepared by the secretariat for the fourteenth session of the Committee, reports on the developments in the standardization of freight containers and provides a statistical evaluation of the world container population in the late 1980s. Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/6 deals with the recent developments in this area. The two documents will assist the Experts in their evaluation of "the impact of new container dimensions on the economies of developing countries.."[1] for the information of the Group of Experts.

The document eititled "UNCTAD/ICC Rules for Multimodal Transport Documents" contains the new rules elaborated by the joint UNCTAD/ICC working group according to resolution 60 (XII) of the Committee on Shipping and is made available for the information of the Group of Experts.

Multimodal Transport Newsletter No. 2, which was made available to the fourteenth session of the Committee, and No. 3 are provided as additional information material.

The Review of Maritime Transport 1990 (TD/B/C.4/340) is provided to allow the Group to review its chapter VI, i.e. "Multimodal transport and technological development."

The Group may wish to review these documents with a view to determining their importance particularly with regard to the impediments developing countries face in the development of multimodal transport, containerization, and technological development, in relation to the drafting of its proposal for a new programme of work of the Committee in these fields.

Item 4. Principal problems faced by users and providers of multimodal and/or container transport operations

Document:

- "Problems and requirements that arise from broad economic reforms and restructuring of selected countries" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/3);

Background documents:

- "Practical problems faced by Governments and commercial parties involved in multimodal transport operations to and from developing countries" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/4); and
- "Information material for shippers to make the most efficient use of multimodal transport" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/330).

Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/3, prepared in response to the Committee's request, outlines the problems and requirements that arise from broad economic reforms and restructuring in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It highlights the need for training of managers in these countries and suggests that the Group of Experts take this into account in its proposal for a new programme of work for the Committee. The background documents are described below.

Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/4, also prepared in response to the Committee's request, reports on practical problems faced by Governments and commercial parties in the introduction of multimodal transport. This document also stresses the importance of the human resource development aspect to-

1 Resolution 67 (XIV) 2 (d) (iv).

gether with more up-to-date information on the issues involved to give local decision-makers the necessary ability to make sound decisions.

Document TD/B/C.4/330, prepared by the secretariat for the fourteenth session of the Committee, deals with the effects of multimodal transport on marketing and distribution, touches on aspects of total distribution, and makes a number of recommendations in these fields which the Experts may wish to consider in their work.

The Group may wish to consider the contents of these documents at some length, particularly since they deal with most of the subjects contained in resolution 67 (XIV) I. (a) (ii), and as they contain several suggestions, in relation to the proposal concerning the future programme of work of the Committee in the field of multimodal transport and containerization, for very practical work to be carried out to assist with the introduction of multimodal transport and containerization.

Item 5. Draft future work programme in the fields of multimodal transport, containerization and technological development

Document:

- "Suggestions for elements of a new programme of work for the Committee on Shipping in the fields of multimodal transport, containerization, and technological development" - note by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/7).

Background document:

- "Work programme on shipping" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/314);
- "Inventory of existing mandates and new draft programme of work in the fields of multimodal transport and technological development" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/323); and
- "Report of the Committee on Shipping on its fourteenth session" (TD/B/1264-TD/B/C.4/336).

Document TD/B/C.4/AC.11/7 consolidates the findings of the documents prepared specifically for the Group of Experts and modifies the original draft programme of work as contained in TD/B/C.4/323 in the light of the comments received at the fourteenth session of the Committee, and of the additional work done. It stresses the importance of interaction between the private and public sectors. The background documents are described below.

Document TD/B/C.4/314 was prepared for the thirteenth session of the Committee on Shipping. Part one of this document covers issues relating to multimodal transport.

Document TD/B/C.4/323 was prepared by the secretariat for the fourteenth session of the Committee. In addition to the inventory of work carried out by the UNCTAD secretariat over the last 15 years, it contains the draft programme of work which the Committee felt unable to consider owing to its lack of expertise in the fields in question.

The Group may wish to use these documents, as well as the findings of the other documents mentioned, as a basis for its own draft programme of work to be submitted to the Committee for its consideration.

Item 5. Other business

Item 6. Adoption of the report of the Group of Experts

In order to enable the Committee on Shipping to adopt its programme of work until year 2000, the report of the Group of Experts will be transmitted to the Committee for consideration at its fifteenth session.

The Group may wish to consider adopting a letter of transmittal to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD informing him of the results of its deliberations.